



## DOG PARK ETIQUETTE AND SAFETY TIPS

1. Have realistic expectations about your dog's suitability for going to a dog park. If he isn't polite or friendly with others, get help to change his behavior before you take him to a dog park. Dog parks are not a place to rehabilitate fearful or aggressive dogs or those that just don't know how to play well with others.
2. Before you take your dog into a dog park, spend a few minutes watching the other dogs and how they are playing and interacting with others. If the dogs seem to be too rough in their play or are intimidating other dogs, come back some other time.
3. If your dog has never been around other dogs before – don't go to a dog park until he's had a chance to be around other dogs in other situations so you have a better idea of how he reacts to other dogs.
4. If you aren't sure how your dog will behave, don't be ashamed or embarrassed to muzzle your dog the first few times he goes to a dog park. Better safe than sorry.
5. Introduce your dogs to other dogs gradually – allow your dog to greet other dogs while he's still in the separate entry area available at some parks, or let your dogs sniff around the fenced boundary.



6. Be careful entering a dog park gate. Other dogs tend to crowd around to greet arriving dog. This jostling and crowding can be quite intimidating to many dogs and may result in a skirmish, or worse.
7. No matter how hard it is to resist, refrain from handling another person's dog unless A) you are given express permission to do so, and/or B) the owner is not distracted.
8. Do not take your small children or babies in strollers to a dog park. Dogs and children can easily frighten one another and bad things can happen to either of them in the blink of an eye.
9. Children under 10 are to be directly supervised by an adult at all times. Understand that running, jumping, and yelling can excite dogs and can lead to nipping. There should be no running, jumping or yelling, and be sure children know how to approach a strange dog correctly.
10. Supervise your dog. This is not the time for you to be distracted talking with other owners or burying yourself in a book. You must be monitoring your dog's activities to be sure she isn't being badly and other dogs are not behaving badly toward her. This is another reason not to take young children – you can't adequately supervise both dogs and kids at the same time.



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11. Be particularly watchful of small dogs around big dogs. Don't let big dogs frighten or threaten small dogs. Aggression between big and small dogs is especially likely to result in injuries to the small dog.
12. Don't take any toys to the park your dog is not willing to share.
13. While tidbits can be a great way to reward good behavior, be careful about giving them to your dog when other dogs are nearby. If your dog can't tolerate other dogs crowding around her wanting to share the goodies, treats may not be a good idea. If you are attempting to give treats to a crowd, require that all dogs sit and stay while eating.
14. Pick up after your dog. You don't want to step in another dog's poop anymore than someone else wants to step in your dog's mess.
15. Avoid grabbing your dog's collar when your dog is playing or interacting with other dogs. Such tugging can sometimes trigger threats and aggression toward nearby dogs.
16. If your dog seems to be fearful or is being "bullied" by other dogs, don't let her stay, thinking she will "get over it", that she will learn to "stand up for herself". Chances are greater her behavior will get worse.
17. Don't let other dogs threaten or scare your dog. If they won't leave, then remove your dog.
18. If your dog is being a bully, being threatening or aggressive or just seems to be overly excited, remove him from the park, either temporarily or permanently. It is not fair to put other dogs at risk. Make the safety of other dogs and people as high a priority as the safety of your own.
19. Know how to break up a dog fight. Direct Stop™, a harmless but effective citronella spray or a small hand-held air horn are your best bets. Don't scream and yell at your dog, try to pull her off by the collar, or get in the middle of the fight as this only adds to the general arousal and greatly increases either the dogs' or your, chances of injury.
20. Always take your cell phone and have the phone number of the local animal control agency. Call animal control or the local police and report any aggressive person or dog that won't leave the dog park. These individuals are dangerous to people and dogs.
21. Be knowledgeable about dog body postures, communication signals and social behavior. You should be able to recognize stress, tension, fear, play, threats and aggression. Know the difference between play (which can be very active and sound violent) and real threats. Know when to intervene and when to stay out of an interaction among dogs. If you feel uninformed about canine behavior, learn more before taking your dog to a park. Harm can come to your dog if you under-react as well as over-react.
22. Recognize that by taking your dog to a dog park, you are accepting a degree of risk that your dog may be injured or may injure another dog. Don't be naïve and think that a dog park is a safe place for your dog to be around other dogs. This may not always be the case.



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## Preventing Dog Bites

The following tips are recommended by the Humane Society of the United States. Everyone knows a dog is man's best friend. And it is generally true. But every dog has the capacity to bite, and children are most often the ones who get bitten. Everyone, particularly children, should learn some basics about dog behavior and safety around dogs.

### When Dogs Might Bite

- When they feel threatened and, sometimes, when they're afraid.
- When they are protecting their territory, food, toys, family or pups.
- When they get excited, even in play.
- When they don't know you.
- When their 'chase response' is triggered.
- When they have been bred and/or trained to be aggressive.
- When they are in pain or irritated.



### "Do's and Don'ts" Around Dogs

- Always ask permission to pet a dog.
- If the owner says it is okay to pet the dog, do it gently and slowly. Stand quietly and still. Let the dog sniff the back of your hand (with your fingers curled into your palm). A dog may also sniff other parts of your body. That's how they say 'hello' and find out who you are.
- Never pet a dog without letting it see and sniff you. (Do not walk up behind a dog, even one you know, and pat it if it does not know you are there.)
- Never go up to a strange dog, particularly one that is confined or restrained (confined in a yard, chained to a doghouse, tied to a fence, etc.).
- Never go into a house or a yard where there is a dog without the owner being there.
- Never run past a dog or turn your back on a dog and run away (a dog's natural instinct is to chase and catch its prey).
- Do not jump around, wave your arms or scream, even in play. These actions excite the dog and stimulate its chase response. Remember, too, that a dog does not have hands. If the dog thinks someone wants it to play, the only way it can interact is by jumping up or by using its mouth to 'grab' and hold. Dogs play rough with each other, and they may think that is the way people want to play, too.
- Do not make fast or jerky movements, particularly toward a dog's head or eyes. (If you hold out your hand for a dog to sniff, do it slowly and do not jerk it back all of a sudden. This could seem like teasing or could startle the dog.)
- Never disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating, or a dog taking care of puppies.
- Do not pet or pick up an injured animal without taking precautions. Even your own pet may bite you if it is in pain or afraid. Be careful, move slowly and try loosely muzzling the dog with a leash or rope. Get help to move the animal.
- Do not 'sic' a dog, even your own, on someone in play. (You will be teaching the dog that it is okay to attack someone, and the dog may think it is okay anytime.)
- Never stare into a dog's eyes, particularly if it is a strange dog. (That is how dogs challenge each other to fight, and it can stimulate an attack.)



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- Do not put your face near a dog's mouth when you are playing or do not know the dog.
- Always assume that a strange dog may see you as an intruder or a threat, and be careful.

### How to Tell When a Dog Might Bite

- The dog may stand stiff and still, maybe with its hair up.
- It may stare at you.
- The dog may hold its tail stiff and up in the air. Very Important - a dog that is friendly will wag its tail, and the wagging will be very relaxed. If you see a dog whose tail is up, stiff and wagging very fast, **watch out!** That can also be a danger signal.
- It may growl, snarl, show its teeth or bark.
- Some dogs may not give any signs. When in doubt, be careful.

### What to Do if You're Threatened by a Dog

If you think a dog may attack you, or you aren't sure what they want to do:

- Stand very still and try to be calm. Don't scream and run.
- Be aware of where the dog is. Don't turn your back on it, but don't stare it in the eyes.
- If the dog comes up to sniff you, let it. In most cases the dog will go away when it decides you aren't a threat.
- If you say anything, speak calmly and firmly.
- Try to stay still until the dog leaves, then back away slowly until it's out of sight.
- If a dog does attack suddenly, 'feed' it your jacket, purse, your bike, anything that may distract it and give it something to bite besides you.
- If you fall or are knocked down, curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck. Try not to scream or roll around.

